

## **DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FNSI)**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) FOR CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC AT FORT DETRICK, MARYLAND**

**AGENCY:** U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Detrick, Frederick, Maryland

**PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE PROPOSED ACTION:** The purpose of the Proposed Action is to improve efficiencies between the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Department of Defense (DoD) by sharing health care services as part of a joint initiative, facilitate the health care services at the existing Fort Detrick's Barquist Army Health Care Facility, and increase access to health care for the regional military community. The need for the Proposed Action is dictated in part by the increasing demand on the existing facility as a result of increasing patient visits in the catchment area which includes Carroll, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery Counties in Maryland, Loudoun County in Virginia, and Adams County in Pennsylvania. The new health care facility would benefit the surrounding area by increasing clinic space and medical personnel, reducing travel time for area veterans and providing enhanced medical services to Fort Detrick.

**PROPOSED ACTION:** The Proposed Action (the preferred alternative) and subject of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is the construction and operation of a Veterans Affairs Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) as an addition to Fort Detrick's existing Barquist Army Health Care Facility. The CBOC would be an approximately 16,500 square-foot (ft<sup>2</sup>) building with a connecting corridor to the existing facility. The Proposed Action also includes a future expansion that would increase the size of the facility by an additional 19,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The CBOC would provide primary care, mental health care, and selected specialty services to veterans. DoD would provide general radiographic services, use of the audiology sound booth, and facility support.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:** The VHA coordinated with the Veterans Integrated Service Network 5 (VISN 5) network office to select the location for the Proposed Action. Several criteria were used when considering potential locations including: location, size, accessibility, utilities, public transportation, environmental, and property availability factors. The Fort Detrick location fulfilled each of the identified criteria and is the only action alternative considered in the EA. In accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the No Action Alternative is also considered. While the No Action Alternative would not change baseline conditions, it provides the basis on which to compare potential impacts that could occur as a result of the Proposed Action. Therefore, only two alternatives were identified for detailed evaluation in this EA, the Proposed Action (to construct and operate a CBOC at Fort Detrick, the preferred alternative) and the No Action (no-build option). The EA characterizes the probable environmental impacts, including impacts to human health, which might result from the implementation of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES and MITIGATION MEASURES:** Potential impacts of the Proposed Action were considered in detail and then compared to the No Action Alternative. Key issues associated with the Proposed Action include increases in local traffic volumes, increases in local air emissions at Fort Detrick (though, regionally increased air emissions would be offset due to shorter travel distances for veterans in/near the Fort Detrick area), and changes to storm water runoff characteristics during construction and post-construction.

The potential for adverse impacts to the natural and human environment were considered to be moderate, at most, and mitigable. Mitigation methods are identified in the EA (Tables 5.4 and 5.5). Substantial positive impacts would occur from the implementation of the Proposed Action, including increased medical services, expanded clinic space, and shorter travel distances for the local/regional military community.

**FACTORS CONSIDERED IN THE FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:** The EA systematically reviewed the nature of the Proposed Action and associated risks and issues. Particular attention was given to the protection of the workforce and surrounding community. Alternatives with regard to needs of the United States and the U.S. Army and potential adverse effects on the environment were evaluated.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The principal conclusions of the EA are: 1) the implementation of the Proposed Action (Construction and Operation of a CBOC by the VA adjacent to Barquist Army Health Care Facility at Fort Detrick, MD) would provide additional medical services to accommodate the rapidly increasing number of veterans in the VISN 5 region; provide more accessible medical services for the military community of Fort Detrick and shorten travel distance, thereby decreasing regional air emissions from vehicles; demonstrate the objectives of a Presidential joint initiative that would lead to more efficient health care resources; and increase Fort Detrick's real property value; 2) the construction and operation of a new CBOC adjacent the Barquist facility would not result in any *significant-and-unmitigable* adverse impacts on the natural or human environments that would preclude the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI); and 3) the implementation of the No Action Alternative would generally have no adverse impacts to the natural or human environments, but it would not provide any of the benefits associated with the Proposed Action. Vehicle emissions would degrade air quality at higher rates due to the longer travel distances for veterans in the Fort Detrick area. Without the benefits of a new CBOC in the Fort Detrick area, the VAMC in Martinsburg would operate under the *status quo* and would provide unsatisfactory services to the veterans in the local area since the increase in workload would be performed in the VISN 5's medical centers.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:** Comments on the EA and this draft FNSI may be directed to Headquarters, US Army Garrison, ATTN: USAG PAO (Mr. Christian Devine), 810 Schreider Street, Suite 213, Fort Detrick, MD 21702-5012 and must be received by June 30, 2006. Copies of the EA are available for review by the public at the Post Library, 1520 Freedman Drive / Suite 300 / Room 143, Fort Detrick, Frederick, MD 21702, at the Frederick County Public Library, C. Burr Artz Central Library, 110 East Patrick Street, Frederick, MD 21701, and at <http://www.detrick.army.mil/usag/ipo/em/ea.cfm>. Copies may also be obtained by writing to Mr. Devine at the address above.